Chapter 7: Evaluation of the Library Media Program
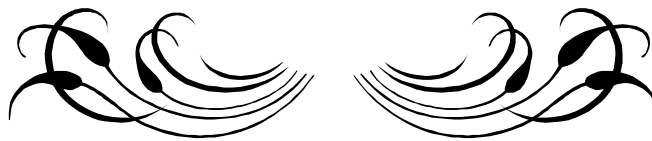
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INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is an important key to assure that the school library media program is essential to the learning environment of the school. The purpose of program evaluation is to review and assess the goals and objectives in order to determine strengths and weaknesses in relation to the users' instructional needs. The evaluation process should involve supporters and users of the library media center program: students, faculty, administrators, parents, and community. Although the process of evaluation is often formidable when facing the MSIP review process, North Central or other formal evaluations, the library media specialist may develop a local evaluation instrument to assess specific portions of the school library media program.

PURPOSES OF EVALUATION

Continuous evaluation and systematic assessment of programs and services assist in preparing and completing formal evaluations which:
- develop plans for improving the LMC program;
- determine the effectiveness of the goals and objectives;
- measure the extent to which the school LMC program reaches the school population;
- assess the level of participation by teachers and students;
- determine the effectiveness of the LMC program's cooperative efforts with teachers in instructional planning and implementation;
- measure how effectively students use information resources to meet specific learning objectives;
- assess the frequency and effectiveness of teachers' use of LMC resources and activities to accomplish classroom objectives;
- determine if sufficient quantity and quality of resources are available;
- establish priorities that result in sufficient funds for resources by:
    - surveying users to determine if program/services meet their needs, and
    - examining target activities and services for expected results.
- determine the quality and the consistency in attaining stated goals and objectives by:
    - suggesting evaluation methods,
    - developing a long-range plan,
    - establishing program benchmarks, and
    - evaluating written goals and developing new goals.
- provide a basis for funding of resources by:
    - providing a rationale for expenditures, and
    - prioritizing expenditures to address needs of all program areas.
- recognize overall strengths and accomplishments and identify weaknesses of the program by:
    - administering a written survey to students, faculty, staff, administrators and the community, and
    - conducting focus group interviews.
- measure the impact of the library media program upon student learning by:
    - studying the research concerning the impact of the LMC program on student learning,
    - forming partnerships with other library media specialists and public and college librarians to solicit feedback about their experiences with students' learning,
    - evaluating student work with teachers, and
    - assessing student information retrieval skills.

EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

■ **Collection Evaluation (*Standards* Self-Evaluation)**

Evaluation is the process of determining strengths and weaknesses to facilitate planning for the improvement of the learning and teaching environment. The school library media specialist has the responsibility to regularly and systematically analyze holdings to determine how effectively the collection meets the needs of the users. The 1997 *Standards For Missouri School Library Media Centers* offers several ways to evaluate collections. Observations of both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the collection must be considerations for overall assessment. Experts have expressed concern about both the quantity and quality of reading, listening, and viewing materials available to students in the media center. Quantity alone is misleading; the quality of the collection is a more accurate measure of the collection's response to user needs.

Quality is addressed on only one dimension in the *Standards For Missouri School Library Media Centers*–copyright dates. However, it is recognized that copyright dates as determiners of quality vary from subject to subject and from topic to topic within broad subject categories. It is the responsibility of the school library media specialist to regularly and systematically analyze holdings based on other quality dimensions such as curriculum fit, maturity appropriateness, range of interests, and other variables appropriate to the local school. Quantitative and qualitative measures in the Missouri Standards are intended both as goals and directives. Ultimately, it is the school library media specialist, working with faculty and administrators, who determines the quality of the collection based on locally perceived needs consistent with these standards.

The application of externally generated criteria can also be helpful; it complements, but does not replace, the professional judgment of the library media specialist. The following three areas (Integration of Formats, Alignment with the Curriculum, and Student and Teacher Needs) are not discrete categories (many of the same concepts are embedded in all of them) but they will be helpful in assessing the library media collection and services. The following comments are suggestions only; they may help but are not meant to constrain the library media specialist's perceptions of the library media center.

Ŏ **Integration of Formats**

Ideally, school library media collections include a variety of print/nonprint and machine-dependent/machine-independent resources to support information needs of users. Integration implies that all resources are cataloged as holdings in the library media center, used in appropriate subject areas, and support the interests of the users. It may or may not imply integrated shelving; however, it does imply that all formats are readily available to all users in the library media center. Many variables influence integration. These variables may include assignments made by teachers, the comfort level of classroom teachers and the library media specialist in using a variety of formats, student learning styles, teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and scheduling patterns.

Questions to be addressed in collection development:

- Does the library media center collection represent a reasonable ratio of nonprint and electronic formats in relation to print materials?
- Do assignments require a variety of formats?
- Do students use a variety of formats in their research activities?
- Do teachers use current technologies to design instructional materials?
- Do classroom collections enhance or inhibit research?

○ Alignment with the Curriculum

The primary function of the school library media center is to support, enhance, and enrich the curriculum. One measure of this function is the "fit" between the learning objectives and the collection. Alignment of the curriculum can be measured from several perspectives including:

- appropriate maturity level of the holdings;
- materials that encourage student exploration;
- reading and comprehension levels of materials in relation to units that are taught;
- extent of holdings to support units taught in the curriculum;
- timeliness, currency, depth of collection for units; and
- depth and breadth of collections.

○ Student and Teacher Needs

Student and teacher needs vary from school to school, subject to subject, and grade to grade; however, all learners have some needs in common. Among those needs are numerous variables which may influence the library media specialist's perceptions; for example, the ratio of demands for materials in relation to holdings in the media center, needs of atypical students (gifted, at-risk, academically and/or physically challenged, ESL), range of learning and teaching styles, numbers of students or teachers who must wait for access to electronic resources, and information that helps integrate emerging technologies and supports local professional development activities.

■ Program Evaluation (MSIP)

Evaluation is necessary to ensure the library media center program is a viable component of education. Although informal evaluations gathered through verbal comments may also be beneficial, they do not take the place of a systematic plan of written assessment. The documentation received from written evaluations provides information that can be incorporated into the MSIP evaluation, indicates effectiveness of the library media program, reviews collaborative planning, and verifies library media center services and resources. The compilation and analysis of data obtained through evaluation identify the means for improving teaching and learning.

The state of Missouri has an evaluation process for school programs of which the library media center program is a component. The purpose of the evaluation is two fold:

> *"First...it must ensure that all schools meet certain basic standards. Second ...it has a responsibility to see that the schools continue to strive for excellence in an increasingly competitive world"* (MSIP 4).

Although the formal evaluation visit occurs once every five years, preparation is ongoing. The library media specialist should study and review the MSIP evaluation document to ensure adequate preparation.

The MSIP process is not a threat; but it is a planning and assessing tool. It is an opportunity for the library media specialist to critically look at the library media center program. The MSIP standards aid the library media specialist in targeting areas of strength or weakness. The MSIP review serves as a tool to initiate communication with staff and administrators for the improvement of the library media program. Opportunities to assess collections and services for MSIP are two-fold–through the annual collection analysis and via formal and informal surveys.

The *Planning and Evaluation Worksheet* found in the *1997 Standards for Missouri School Library Media Centers* will be used as documentation of progress by the visiting MSIP team. The evaluation form is to be completed by the library media specialist for each building. After the form is complete, strengths and weaknesses in the collection and the overall program should be identified.

Defining needs at various collection development stages will help the library media

specialist work with faculty and administrators to define goals and to develop and justify budgets. The library media specialist, in consultation with district administration, will develop a plan of action to identify the method that will be used to improve the prioritized area(s). After determining the quantities of resources in the building level collection, the library media specialist must evaluate the quality of the collection. A plan should be developed to address the top one or two weak areas.

Develop two or more strategies that will be implemented between the time the need was identified and the next MSIP review. The plan should be short and concise, addressing continuous progress. The cost of the plan should be in addition to the annual budget not taken from the district's annual commitment. The plan should include a timeline indicating the districts' continuous effort to improve the library media centers. The quantitative data and the qualitative data and the plan should be maintained in the library media center as documentation for the MSIP review. These documents will be sufficient documentation to demonstrate the district's progress from one MSIP review to the next.

■ **Library Media Centers (LMC)**
The following are the standards (**10.1 A, B, C, D**) and indicators (**1, 2, 3,...**) taken directly from the MSIP manual. They will be used to evaluate the entire library media program. Suggestions for the library media specialist to consider when evaluating resources and services are detailed under the heading **Considerations**. Asterisked items are required; non-asterisked items are only recommended.

10.1 A: All Library Media Centers (LMCs) in the district have written procedural plans.

* 1. The district's written procedural plan for the LMC is developed cooperatively by the library media staff, administrators and other staff members.

* 2. The LMC written procedural plan includes mission and goal statements, program objectives and evaluative criteria.

* 3. The district has board-adopted policies regarding copyrights, confidentiality, collection development/selection and access to the LMC resources, which have been reviewed by the board within the last five years.

~ Considerations ~

In preparation for the MSIP review, the LMS should have the following documents available:
- Goals and objectives;
- Long- and short-range plans;
- Board approved library media center policies which include the following:
  - * Weeding,
  - * Selection and acquisition,
  - * Copyright,
  - * Collection development,
  - * Circulation/Access,
  - * Confidentiality,
  - *Gift Policies, and
  - Reconsideration/Censorship;
- Evaluation criteria which includes surveys of students, staff, parents, state evaluation reports, and performance based school evaluation;

- Evidence of student and staff input into the evaluation of services;
- Evidence that the LMC budget was developed with input from the LMS and staff members;
- Written procedural plan(s); and
- Copies of forms used to survey students and staff regarding their evaluation of the LMC services, a copy of the results of the most recent evaluation, and the actions taken to improve services based on these findings.

10.1 B   The district's library media centers are readily available and accessible to all students and staff.

* 1.   Each LMC is open for and staffed for student and faculty use during regular school hours and before and after school.

* 2.   The LMC environment (attractiveness, design, furnishings, general resource accessibility) encourages student and faculty use.

* 3.   Student and staff use of the LMC is documented.

4.   The physical space of the LMC is evaluated according to the minimum state recommendations outlined in the state's current library media standards.

~ Considerations ~

- Is the LMC open for student and staff use during regular school hours, before and after school, and for all days that students are in attendance?
- Does the environment encourage use by students and faculty?
- Are there instruments in place to validate usage of the LMC resources?
- Are records of student and staff use of LMC resources maintained and evaluated?

Possible survey questions asked of teachers and students and expanded upon:
- Do you regularly use the LMC in your instructional program?
- Is the LMC open at convenient times for student and staff use?
- Is there a professional staff member in the LMC to help students and staff?
- Is it easy to get help using the LMC?
- Is the LMC usually available when needed?

10.1 C   Library media centers have resources available in sufficient quantity and quality to support, enhance and enrich the curriculum and have a plan to work toward meeting the state library media standards.

* 1.   All materials are cataloged, classified and processed.

* 2.   The district annually evaluates its resource collection according to criteria outlined in the state's library media standard's publication and has incorporated a systematic set of improvement strategies into its Comprehensive School Improvement Plan.

* 3. The LMC resources are evaluated annually, using collection-analysis techniques, to identify strengths and weaknesses.

* 4. Obsolete materials and worn-out equipment are replaced on a regular basis.

* 5. The library media staff collaborates with curriculum and technology committees to integrate library media resources into the curriculum.

* 6. Resources are selected by the library media staff with input from students and faculty.

* 7. Library media centers use educational and informational technology to provide users access to external resources (e.g., inter-school and inter-library loans, on-line databases, community resources and computer networks).

* 8. The LMC provides culturally diverse resources.

9. An electronic catalog and circulation system is in place.

10. The library media specialist communicates with students, staff and community members on a regular basis about LMC resources, equipment and activities.

~ Considerations ~

Are learning resources:
- available in sufficient quantity and variety to appeal to a wide range of interests and learning styles?
- in good condition?
- timely and accurate?
- appropriate for grades and ages served?
- jointly selected by the professional media center staff and faculty?

Do on-site interviews indicate that the LMS is directly involved in curriculum development/ revision within the district?
- Are teachers solicited for input into the selection of resources?
- Are there sufficient LMC materials to support teaching units?
- Do students find relevant materials on topics they are researching?
- Do parents feel that the LMC provides students with a wide variety of books and learning materials?
- Does the LMC have an electronic management system or an up-to-date card catalog and a shelf list of its holdings?

Technological resources include but are not limited to the following:
- Public access catalogs;
- Online telecommunications;
- Online databases;

- Electronic reference materials;
- Periodicals in print, microfilm, or electronic format;
- Interactive video;
- Satellite reception and taping;
- Computer networks;
- Software to support the curriculum; and
- Laser Disks.

10.1 D   The LMC provides materials and instruction in research skills and effective use of library resources.

* **1.   The library media staff, in partnership with the faculty, teaches information literacy skills or integrates these skills across the curriculum, as outlined either in a written library skills guide or in other appropriate written curriculum guides.**

* **2.   The library media staff assists all student populations and faculty with individual and classroom projects.**

~ Considerations ~

- Is instruction available for students in current information literacy skills and the use of LMC resources?
- Is there a list of information and technology literacy skills?
- Are the information literacy skills integrated into grade/subject area curricula? (cross-referenced to other curricular guides which should contain information literacy/research objectives as strands within subject area curricula)
- Do students have assistance from a professional LMS in carrying out research projects?

Bold sections are from the *Missouri School Improvement Program: Standards and Indicators Manual*, January 1997, p.27-28 and *MSIP Procedures Handbook*, p. 27.

SAMPLE SURVEYS

Every school library media specialist is advised to develop an assessment instrument that addresses local issues and concerns of the individual school.

The surveys included in this document were designed to meet the needs of one school district and some questions may not be appropriate for other districts across the state. These are provided to assist the library media specialist in the development of surveys that reflect the needs of individual programs. (See samples of surveys in Appendix F)

Ö **Assessment of the Building Level Library Media Program**

The Survey that follows is adapted from the national guidelines, *Information Power*. It is keyed to the MSIP *Standards and Indicators* and may be used as a self-evaluation form by the library media specialist. Data gathered from the faculty and principal through this assessment can be compiled as the MSIP building level survey.

Assessment of the Building Level Library Media Center Program

Circle the answer that most appropriately describes the statement.
1 = Definitely true 2 = mostly true   3 = sometimes true
4 = mostly untrue   5 = definitely untrue   6 = do not know

THE LIBRARY MEDIA PROGRAM

is conducted according to a clearly defined mission statement and defined goals and objectives. MSIP A2	1	2	3	4	5	6
has a mission statement and goals and objectives cooperatively developed and supported by the library media staff, administrators, teachers, students, and community. MSIP A1	1	2	3	4	5	6
is evaluated regularly to assess effectiveness of services and collections. MSIP A2	1	2	3	4	5	6
documents student and staff use of the LMC. MSIP B3	1	2	3	4	5	6
is consciously and effectively promoted in the school and community by library media personnel. MSIP C10	1	2	3	4	5	6

THE COLLECTION (Resources and Equipment)

is selected cooperatively by library media specialist, teachers and students to support the curriculum. MSIP C6	1	2	3	4	5	6
is augmented by resources from outside the media center through interlibrary loan and/or electronic means. MSIP C7	1	2	3	4	5	6
is developed using a selection policy adopted by the school board. MSIP A3	1	2	3	4	5	6
is organized, classified and cataloged following a standardized format. MSIP C1	1	2	3	4	5	6
is cataloged and circulated through the use of an automated system. MSIP C9	1	2	3	4	5	6

is circulated through procedures that ensure
confidentiality of borrowers. MSIP A3   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

provides culturally diverse resources.
MSIP C8   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

is evaluated annually. MSIP C2, 3   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

is evaluated for replacement of obsolete materials
and worn out equipment. MSIP C4   1   2   3   4   5   6

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LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER FACILITIES

are flexibile to accommodate changing needs.
MSIP B4   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

provide easy access that encourages
frequent use. MSIP B2   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

are readily accessible before, during and after
school hours. MSIP B1   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

provide comfortable, efficient, safe and
aesthetically pleasing environment for
all users. MSIP B2   1   2   3   4   5   6

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THE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST

assists students in identifying and accessing
information housed in the library media
center and at remote locations. MSIP C7   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

utilizes a flexible schedule for all classes to
allow the planning and delivery of resource
based instruction at the appropriate time.
MSIP D1   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

informs teacher, students, and administrators
of new materials, equipment, and services.
MSIP C10   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

instructs students in locating information.
MSIP D1, 2   1   2   3   4   5   6

instructs students in evaluating and interpreting
information in all available formats. MSIP D1   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

instructs students in communicating information,
including media production. MSIP D1   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

plans curricular content with teachers so that
instruction in information use and communication
skills is integral rather than isolated. MSIP D1   1   2   3   4   5   6

_____

collaborates with curriculum and technology
committees to integrate library media resources
into the curriculum.   MSIP C5   1   2   3   4   5   6

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Further Reading

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